

Amherst Town Council Rules of Procedure

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Table of Contents

RULE 1. PREAMBLE, PURPOSE, DEFINITIONS, AND AMENDMENT	1
1.1 Preamble	1
1.2 Purpose	1
1.3 Authority	1
1.4 Parliamentary Procedure	1
1.5 Definitions	1
1.6 Amendment and Repeal	2
RULE 2. ORGANIZATION	3
2.1 Election of Officers	3
2.2 Powers and Duties of the President and Vice President (Charter Sec. 2.2(b) and 2.2(c))	3
2.3 Clerk of the Council	3
RULE 3. COUNCIL MEETINGS	5
3.1 Presiding Officer	5
3.2 Regular Council Meetings	5
3.3 Quorum	5
3.4 Remote Participation	5
3.5 Minutes of Council Meetings	5
3.6 Special Meetings	6
3.7 Emergency Meetings	6
3.8 Public Dialogue	6
3.9 Work Sessions	6
RULE 4. AGENDAS	7

4.1 Preparation of Agenda.....	7
4.2 Agenda Items	7
4.3 Additional Public Comments.....	7
4.4 Executive Sessions	7
4.5 Posting of the Agenda and Packets	8
4.6 Consent Agenda	8
RULE 5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION	9
5.1 Regular Meetings	9
5.2 Public Hearings	9
5.3 Public Dialogue	10
5.4 Public Forums (Charter Sections 2.13, 5.3, 5.6, 5.7(d), and 6.1(b))	10
5.5 District Meetings (Charter Sec. 2.7)	11
5.6 Free Petition (Charter Sec. 8.2)	11
5.7 Open Meetings (Charter Sec. 8.1) and Initiatives (Charter Sec. 8.3)	11
RULE 6. CODE OF COURTESY, CONDUCT, AND DEBATE.....	12
6.1 General Rules for Conduct During Council and Committee Meetings.....	12
6.2 Public Courtesy and Decorum	12
6.3 Councilors’ Conduct and Debate Decorum	13
6.4 Preservation of Order, Right to Speak, and Vote.....	13
6.5 Conflict of Interest.....	13
RULE 7. MOTIONS	14
7.1 Motions.....	14
7.2 Importance of Deliberation and Right to Postpone	14
7.3 Recess	15
7.4 Points of Order	15
7.5 Motions for Reconsideration	15
7.6 Motions to Rescind or Amend Something Previously Adopted	15
RULE 8. LEGISLATIVE PROCESS	16
8.1 Introduction of Bylaws and Other Measures.....	16

8.2 Referral of Measures	17
8.3 Public Notice of Bylaw Proposals	18
8.4 Discussion of Measures	18
8.5 Absence of a Councilor Sponsor of a Measure	18
8.6 Consideration of Non-Emergency Measures Prior to Vote	18
8.7 Resubmission	19
8.8 Withdrawal of Measures	19
8.9 Carryover of Measures to New Legislative Sessions	19
RULE 9. VOTING REQUIREMENTS	20
9.1 Quorum	20
9.2 Meeting and Posting Requirements	20
9.3 Method and Timing of Voting	20
9.4 Roll Call Votes	20
9.5 Number of Votes Required	20
RULE 10. COUNCIL COMMITTEES AND COMMITTEES OF THE TOWN	22
10.1 Council Committees	22
10.2 Process to establish Council Committees	22
10.3 Standing Council Committees	22
10.4 Ad Hoc Council Committees	22
10.5 Powers and Duties of Standing and Ad Hoc Council Committees	23
10.6 Councilors Appointed to Committees Named in the Charter	24
10.7 Creation of Town Committees	24
10.8 Councilors as Non-voting Liaisons	24
10.9 Appointment of Non-Voting Members of Finance Committee	24
Appendix A: Town Council Statement of Values	26

RULE 1. PREAMBLE, PURPOSE, DEFINITIONS, AND AMENDMENT

1.1 Preamble

The Amherst Town Council commits to the highest levels of inclusion, openness, and transparency in its meetings and deliberations consistent with the prudent transacting of the business of the Town. Public input and engagement are high priorities for the Town Council, and recognized with roles in Town Council meetings, and provisions for public dialogue and forums. In furtherance of these principles, the Town Council has adopted a Statement of Values to guide it. Appendix A.

1.2 Purpose

These Rules of Procedure shall be observed at and guide meetings of the Town Council. The Rules of Procedure codify the working relationships among members of the Town Council, between the Town Council and the Town Manager, and between the Town Council and multiple-member bodies, officials, and residents, to conduct Town business efficiently, effectively, and respectfully, while still allowing robust public input.

1.3 Authority

The Town Council is required to adopt Rules of Procedure under Section 2.6(d) of the Amherst Home Rule Charter.

1.4 Parliamentary Procedure

The Town Council shall refer to *Robert's Rules of Order Newly Revised, 11th Edition*, or subsequent editions, in all questions of parliamentary procedure and points of order not otherwise provided for by the Amherst Home Rule Charter, these Rules of Procedure, bylaw, or special rules.

1.5 Definitions

Unless another meaning is clearly apparent from the manner in which the word or phrase is used, the following words used in these Rules of Procedure shall have the following meanings:

Charter: The word "Charter" shall mean the Amherst Home Rule Charter adopted by voters on March 27, 2018, and any amendments thereto subsequently adopted.

Computation of Time: When the period of time specified is less than 7 days, intermediate Saturdays, Sundays, and legal holidays shall not be included; when the period is 7 days or more, every day shall be counted.

Council: The word "Council" shall mean the Amherst Town Council.

Councilor: The word "Councilor" shall mean a member of the Amherst Town Council.

Legislative session: the phrase "legislative session" shall mean the term that begins on the day Town Councilors are sworn in following the regular town election and ends when their successors have been sworn in.

MGL: The word "MGL" shall mean the General Laws of the Commonwealth of Massachusetts, a codification and revision of statutes enacted on December 22, 1920, and including all amendments thereto subsequently adopted.

President: The word "President" shall mean the President of the Town Council.

Rules: The word "Rules" shall mean these Rules of Procedure, and any amendments thereto subsequently adopted.

Town: The word "Town" shall mean the Town of Amherst.

1.6 Amendment and Repeal

Amending or repealing these Rules of Procedures shall require a majority vote of the full Council. Prior to final passage proposed amendments shall be read at two separate meetings of the Council.

RULE 2. ORGANIZATION

2.1 Election of Officers

At the first Council meeting after elected Councilors have been sworn in, and annually thereafter, Councilors, as the first order of business, shall elect a President and Vice President for 1-year terms by a majority vote of the full Council.

- a. The Clerk of the Council shall preside over the election of the President.
- b. Councilors may nominate other Councilors or themselves. No second is required.
- c. Councilors who have been nominated may speak to their qualifications.
- d. The Council may reorganize at any time at its discretion. [Charter Sec. 2.2\(a\)](#).

2.2 Powers and Duties of the President and Vice President ([Charter Sec. 2.2\(b\)](#) and [2.2\(c\)](#))

The President shall:

- a. Prepare agendas. See Rule 4.
- b. Preside at all Council meetings. See Rule 3.
- c. Appoint Councilors to Council Committees. See Rule 10.
- d. Oversee Council Committees in order to facilitate the work of the Committee and its relationship to the full Council.
- e. Perform ceremonial functions.
- f. Perform other duties consistent with the Charter or by vote of the Council.
- g. Each year the President and the Town Manager shall address the elected bodies, officers of the Town, and the public on the Amherst state of affairs.
- h. Serve as spokesperson of the Council for all inquiries and correspondence addressed to the full Council.

The Vice President shall preside in absence of the President.

2.3 Clerk of the Council

The Council shall appoint a Clerk of the Council, who may be a Town employee, to hold office at the Council's pleasure. The Clerk of the Council shall perform duties as may be assigned by the Charter or by vote of the Council. [Charter Sec. 2.9\(a\)](#), [5.9](#), [8.2](#), and [8.3](#).

Duties of the Clerk of the Council include:

- a. Prior to Council meetings:
 1. Post the list of topics for all meetings.
 2. Receive all items for the agenda, including reports, at least 3 days prior to the meeting.
 3. Provide copies of the agenda and all materials to every Councilor at least 2 days prior to the meeting.
- b. During Council meetings:
 1. Preside over the election of the President. See Rule 2.1.

2. Attend all Council meetings to facilitate making of motions, roll call votes, and use of written and electronic materials during the meeting.
 3. Assist the President with Public Participation. See Rule 5.
 4. Provide Minutes of all Council meetings. See Rule 3.
- c. After Council meetings:
1. Prepare Minutes of all Council meetings.
 2. Record Orders for the Council's disposition of bylaws and other measures, and file copies with the Town Clerk and with other departments/officials as appropriate.
 3. Monitor Charter timelines governing the introduction, adoption, amendment, postponement, and repeal of measures [[Charter Sec. 1.7](#) and [2.10](#)] and other Council actions.
- d. General Duties:
1. Assist the Council in coordinating its administrative requirements under Charter Sec. 2.8, 2.11, 2.12, 3.6-3.8, 4.1, 5.5, 5.6, 5.7, 8.4, and other sections as required.
 2. Maintain files for all Council orders, records of proceedings, and other documents.
 3. Update the Town Council webpage with agenda packet materials and other documents as they become available.
 4. Manage the Council's annual budget, including the payment of all invoices, payroll, and other expenses.
 5. Coordinate the work of the individual or firm selected to complete the annual Audit. [Charter Sec. 5.8.](#)
 6. Receive Group Petitions under [Charter Sec. 8.2.](#)
 7. Receive Initiative Measures and forward them in accordance with [Charter Sec. 8.3.](#)

RULE 3. COUNCIL MEETINGS

3.1 Presiding Officer

The President shall be the presiding officer for all regular Council meetings. In the absence of the President, the following order shall determine who shall preside.

- First, the Council Vice-President. [Charter Sec. 2.2\(b\)](#).
- Second, the Council shall elect a President pro-tempore for that meeting.

3.2 Regular Council Meetings

- a. Regular Council meetings shall be held on the first and third Monday of each month, with the schedule adjusted as needed for holidays, unless amended by a majority vote of the Council.
- b. The annual calendar of regular Council meetings shall be determined in January each year and posted on the Town bulletin board.
- c. Regular meetings shall take place in the Town Room of Town Hall, starting at 6:30 PM.
- d. Meetings aim to end by 10:00 PM, unless the Council otherwise determines.
- e. All regular Council meetings shall provide for a period of public comment. [Charter Sec. 2.6\(d\)\(ii\)](#); also Rule 5.

3.3 Quorum

- a. The presence of 7 Councilors is necessary for a quorum. [Charter Sec. 2.6\(b\)](#).
- b. Councilors participating remotely do not count toward a quorum. [940 CMR 29.10 \(4\)\(b\)](#).

3.4 Remote Participation

Councilors may participate remotely in any Council meeting in compliance with the Town's Remote Participation Policy. [940 CMR 29.10 \(2\)](#).

3.5 Minutes of Council Meetings

Minutes of Council meetings shall comply with the general laws ([MGL Ch. 30A Sec. 22](#) and [940 CMR 29.11](#)), the Charter ([Sec. 2.6\(d\)\(v\)](#)), and these Rules.

- a. Content of Minutes:
 1. Date, time, and place of the meeting.
 2. Councilors present, Councilors absent, and Councilors participating remotely.
 3. Summary of the discussions on each subject.
 4. Actions taken.
 5. Names of the makers and seconders of all motions.
 6. Record of each vote taken by each Councilor, or indication that the vote was unanimous.
 7. Any roll call vote.
 8. List of documents and other exhibits used at the meeting.

- b. Adoption and Publication of Record of Votes and Minutes: ([Charter Sec. 2.6\(d\)\(v\)](#))
1. A record of the votes taken at the meeting shall be made available on the Town website by close of business the day after the meeting.
 2. The Council shall receive draft minutes no later than 3 days prior to the Council meeting at which the minutes are to be approved.
 3. Minutes of regular Council meetings shall be approved by majority vote of the Council at the next regular Council meeting.
 4. As provided in [MGL Ch. 30A Sec. 22](#), the Council, with the assistance of the Clerk of the Council and Town Manager, shall, at reasonable intervals, not to exceed six months, enter Executive Session under MGL Ch. 30A Sec. 21(a)(7), if needed, to approve executive session minutes and to review the minutes of executive sessions to determine if the relevant statutory provisions warrant continued non-disclosure. All Council votes to release executive session minutes shall be taken by roll call in executive session.

Other Council Meetings

3.6 Special Meetings

Special Council meetings may be called by the President or at the call of any 3 or more Councilors, for any purpose. [Charter Sec. 2.6\(d\)\(iii\)](#).

3.7 Emergency Meetings

The President, or Vice President if the President is unavailable, may designate and call an emergency meeting which shall comply with the general laws. [940 CMR 29.02](#) and [Charter Sec. 2.6\(d\)\(iv\)](#).

3.8 Public Dialogue

The Council may schedule Public Dialogue sessions. See Rule 5.3.

3.9 Work Sessions

Work Sessions are an opportunity for the Council, Town Government and invited participants to discuss specific issues. Upon request of the President or a majority of the full Council, the Council may meet in a Work Session prior to the regular Council meeting or at times determined in advance. The purpose of a Work Sessions is to discuss, review, research or explore topics for possible later action. Each Work Session shall be devoted exclusively to specific subject and include preliminary receipt and discussion of information deemed appropriate. To enrich and inform such informal discussions, the Council shall invite other participants with experience, expertise, or roles relevant to the issue at hand. No formal vote shall be taken, although informal polls are permitted. Work Sessions shall be open to the public in accordance with the Open Meeting Law, with an opportunity for public or written comments pertaining to the issues at hand.

RULE 4. AGENDAS

4.1 Preparation of Agenda

The President shall prepare the agenda for Council meetings with advice from Councilors and the Town Manager. [Charter Sec. 2.2\(b\)](#).

4.2 Agenda Items

Council meetings shall proceed in the following order unless the President or presiding officer determines a shift in order will facilitate the process of the meeting:

1. Call to Order (6:30 p.m.) after determination of quorum
2. Announcements
3. Hearings
4. General Public Comments
5. Consent Agenda
6. Resolutions or Proclamations
7. Presentations and Discussion Items
8. Action Items
9. Appointments
10. Committee Reports
11. Approval of Minutes
12. Town Manager Report
13. Town Council Comments
 - a. President's report
 - b. Future Agenda Items and Meetings
 - c. Councilor Comments
14. Topics the President did not reasonably anticipate 48 hours before the meeting
15. Executive Session
16. Adjourn

4.3 Additional Public Comments

When presentations, discussions, or major action items appear on the agenda for the first time, the President or presiding officer shall include additional public comment sessions specific to the issue.

4.4 Executive Sessions

Executive sessions may be entered only after the Council has first convened in open session for which notice has been appropriately posted. The President shall cite the reason and call for a Council vote. A majority vote taken by roll call of Councilors present and voting at the meeting is necessary to initiate an executive session.

Executive sessions shall only be convened for reasons stated in [MGL Ch. 30A Sec. 21\(a\)](#).

4.5 Posting of the Agenda and Packets

All items for the agenda, including reports, shall be submitted to the President and Clerk of the Council no later than 3 days prior to the meeting. Copies of materials and the agenda shall be provided to Councilors no later than 2 days prior to the meeting.

4.6 Consent Agenda

A Consent Agenda may be used to allow the Council to act on matters of business that require action by the Council which are considered to be of a routine and non-controversial nature. The individual items on the consent agenda shall be approved, adopted, or enacted by one motion of the Council.

Examples of items appropriate for the Consent Agenda include but are not limited to approval of Council minutes; passage of resolutions, proclamations, citations, or commemorations; approval of leases and agreements; acceptance of grants, deeds, or easements; or approval of Town Manager appointments. In addition, items appropriate for the Consent Agenda may also include any action or informational item that a subject matter Council Committee has forwarded to the full Council with unanimous recommendation for approval, except any item having a high level of public interest or controversy as determined by the Council President. Items ineligible for the Consent Agenda shall include any action or informational item that a subject matter Council Committee has forwarded to the full Council without unanimous recommendation for approval or any item having a high level of public interest or controversy as determined by the Council President.

No discussion or debate shall take place regarding any item on the Consent Agenda beyond asking questions for simple clarification. Simple questions, clarifications, or short amounts of dialogue relative to a consent item may be discussed after the motion, but before approval.

All items on the Consent Agenda shall be voted on and adopted by a single motion, with the minutes reflecting the motion and vote on each item.

Any member may remove an item from the Consent Agenda and place it on the regular agenda for discussion at its appropriate location, by asking for removal while the President lists the Consent Agenda items prior to the motion to adopt. The request to remove an item from the Consent Agenda does not require a second. An item from the Consent Agenda should be removed if a Councilor wants to vote against the specific item.

RULE 5. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

The Council encourages all residents to attend its meetings and welcomes their views on matters within the Council's jurisdiction, whether expressed in person, by phone, or by written communication.

5.1 Regular Meetings

All regular meetings of the Town Council shall provide for a period of public comment. [Charter Sec. 2.6\(d\)\(ii\)](#).

- a. Content of public comment: any matter within the jurisdiction of the Council.
- b. Length of public comment: up to 3 minutes, unless the presiding officer has determined a shorter period is necessary for the completion of Council business. If a substantial number of people wish to speak, the presiding officer may reduce the time allowed per person to no less than 1 minute.
- c. Number of public comments: 1 per person per comment period.
- d. Recognition: No one may speak at a Council meeting without first being recognized by the presiding officer.
 1. A register of persons wishing to comment may be available from the Clerk of the Council prior to the start of the meeting.
 2. The presiding officer shall recognize individuals on that register first, with preference given to residents.
 3. Non-residents, as well as residents not on the register, may be recognized if time allows.
 4. Each person commenting shall identify themselves by name upon recognition by the presiding officer.
 5. Any written comments during a meeting shall be submitted only to the Clerk of the Council, who will forward them to the Council.
- e. The intention of the public comment period is for the Council to hear comments from the public, not to engage in discussions or debate with the Council.
 1. For questions of fact or requests for more information, the presiding officer may recognize a Councilor or staff member to answer.
 2. Councilors may be recognized by the presiding officer to ask clarifying questions.
- f. In addition to the public comment period typically held near the beginning of a regular Council meeting, the President may allow for comments from the public related to specific agenda items after Councilors have had the opportunity to speak. When presentations, discussions, or major action items appear on the agenda for the first time, the President shall include additional public comment sessions specific to the issue.

5.2 Public Hearings

Public hearings are an opportunity for residents to address the Council on specific issues. These comments may be presented orally or in writing.

- a. The time allocated to public hearings at any meeting of the Council shall not be more than 3 hours duration at any 1 session, unless the Council votes to waive this limitation. A date, time, and place certain for continuance shall be required for any uncompleted hearing.
- b. Hearings authorized by the Council shall have precedence over other presentations. In all hearings, the case of the petitioner shall have precedence except where the President shall prescribe otherwise.
- c. Public hearing format:
 1. Petitioner's presentation
 2. Questions from Councilors
 3. Public asking a question
 4. Public speaking in favor
 5. Public speaking in opposition
 6. Questions from Councilors
- d. Council debate on the merits of the petition shall follow the vote on a motion to close the evidentiary portion of the hearing.
- e. This format shall not apply to public hearings to consider the annual budget ([Charter Sec. 5.5\(a\)](#)), the master plan ([Charter Sec. 9.8\(b\)](#)), hearings where procedures are governed by state law, or hearings on topics where the Council is not responding to a formal petition. Group Petition hearing timelines are controlled by [Charter Sec. 8.2\(b\)](#).

5.3 Public Dialogue

By majority vote, the Council may hold a Public Dialogue session. This session may occur during the hour before the call of order of a regularly scheduled Council meeting. At Public Dialogues the Council, the Town Manager, and any appropriate staff as determined by the Town Manager shall welcome all interested individuals for an informal dialogue session. Public Dialogues are meant to provide an opportunity for members of the public to directly interact with Councilors, the Town Manager, and staff (as determined by the Town Manager). By majority vote of the Council, Public Dialogue sessions may be held at times other than prior to a regular Council meeting and in locations other than Town Hall. All Public Dialogue sessions shall comply with Open Meeting law.

5.4 Public Forums ([Charter Sections 2.13, 5.3, 5.6, 5.7\(d\), and 6.1\(b\)](#))

Public forums provide an opportunity to present information on relevant issues, and an opportunity for the public to ask questions and provide feedback to the Council and Town Manager on scheduled topics. As defined in the Charter, a "public forum" shall mean a meeting during which more than one-half of the time is devoted to public comment. For purposes of calculating time, responses by the Town Manager, staff, or Councilors to questions or comments made by the public shall be considered part of the time devoted to public comment.

The Council shall call no fewer than one public forum per year for each of the following:

- Budget Public Forum ([Charter Sec. 5.3](#)): This forum is intended for the Council and the Town Manager to present priorities, context based on prior years' budgets, revenue and expenditure forecasts, and other relevant information, and to solicit feedback from the public.
- Capital Improvement Forum ([Charter Sec. 5.7](#)): The Council shall make the Town Manager's proposed capital improvement program available to the public and shall hold at least one public forum on the proposed plan. After the public forum but on or before June 30, the Council shall adopt the capital improvements plan, which may be amended, provided that each amendment shall be voted on separately and that an increase in the capital plan shall clearly identify the method of financing.
- Master Plan Public Forum ([Charter Sec. 2.13](#)): This forum is to discuss issues related to the master plan. The focus shall be determined by the Council after seeking advice from the Planning Board and other Town Committees.

In addition to the specified forums, the Council shall hold public forums in the event the Town Manager proposes a new appropriation or supplemental budget expenditure or a major reorganization of the Town administrative agencies. [Charter Sec. 5.6](#) and [6.1\(b\)](#), respectively.

5.5 District Meetings ([Charter Sec. 2.7](#))

Councilors from each of the 5 districts shall convene a minimum of 2 meetings in their districts each year open to all residents. The purpose is to facilitate two-way communication between the Town government and district residents. Residents may submit topics to their District Councilors in advance. Meetings must include ample time for public discussion, comments, questions, and suggestions. District Councilors may offer more than 2 meetings a year.

5.6 Free Petition ([Charter Sec. 8.2](#))

Resident petitions: The Council shall receive all petitions or measures proposed and signed by 1 or more residents concerning a matter for recommended action. Council action on such resident petitions is discretionary.

Group petitions: The Council shall hold a public hearing on every petition addressed to the Council signed by at least 150 voters. The hearing shall take place no later than 3 months after the petition is filed with the Town Clerk.

5.7 Open Meetings ([Charter Sec. 8.1](#)) and Initiatives ([Charter Sec. 8.3](#))

The Charter provides for open meetings (request of 200 residents in writing) and initiatives (signed by at least 250 voters).

RULE 6. CODE OF COURTESY, CONDUCT, AND DEBATE

6.1 General Rules for Conduct During Council and Committee Meetings

All meeting participants including Councilors, residents, and staff should confine their remarks to the substance of the issue at hand. Participants shall avoid discussing personalities and not impugn the motive, character, or integrity of any individual. The Council supports the right of a resident to criticize its local government, but this should be done appropriately and responsibly, with civility and discretion. All participants shall address their remarks to the presiding officer and maintain a civil tone. These rules of conduct shall also apply to all written correspondence.

Interactions shall be guided by the values statement adopted by the Council. Appendix A.

During meetings:

- a. Discourse at Council meetings shall be marked by courtesy, openness, and respect, even in the face of disagreement.
- b. Discussion shall be centered on issues on the agenda and shall not use unbecoming or abusive language.
- c. Cell phones and other such devices shall be silenced during Council meetings.
- d. Councilors and members of the public shall not hold private conversations during Council meetings.

6.2 Public Courtesy and Decorum

- a. The Council welcomes the public to meetings and encourages public comments.
- b. Public comments shall focus on specific issues.
- c. Generally, the public shall not be allowed to participate in the deliberations of the Council. Exceptions to this rule shall be at the discretion of the presiding officer.
- d. Those present shall not engage in audible demonstrations of approval or disapproval.
- e. Those present shall not conduct themselves in manner that disturbs or impedes the orderly procedure of the meeting. If such conduct occurs, the presiding officer may call a recess or adjourn the meeting.
- f. Any member of the public may make an audio or video recording of an open session of a public meeting. A member of the public who wishes to record a meeting must first notify the presiding officer and must comply with reasonable requirements regarding audio or video equipment established by the presiding officer so as not to interfere with the meeting. The presiding officer is required to inform other attendees of any such recording at the beginning of the meeting. If someone arrives after the meeting has begun and wishes to record a meeting, that person should attempt to notify the presiding officer prior to beginning recording, ideally in a manner that does not significantly disrupt the meeting in progress (such as passing a note to the Clerk of the Council). The presiding officer should endeavor to acknowledge such attempts at notification and announce the fact of any recording to those in attendance. [MGL Ch. 30A Sec. 20\(f\)](#).

6.3 Councilors' Conduct and Debate Decorum

Councilors shall conduct themselves in orderly manner to assure that the business of the Town is attended to as expeditiously as the deliberative process allows.

- a. Councilors shall address requests to speak through the presiding officer and shall not speak until recognized.
- b. When 2 or more Councilors request to be recognized at once, the presiding officer shall designate the order of speaking.
- c. No Councilor shall speak more than once until all other Councilors desiring to do so have spoken.
- d. Councilors shall not interrupt a colleague except to raise a point of order, to express a point of personal privilege, or to doubt the presence of a quorum.
- e. Councilors may speak upon a matter for no more than 3 minutes at a time, except when introducing or presenting a measure. A Councilor may yield all or part of this time to another Councilor.
- f. Discussion shall be limited to the topic before the Council. Extraneous issues shall have no place in the debate.
- g. In discussions, Councilors shall stay focused on the issue at hand until a decision has been made or the discussion has been postponed to a later time.
- h. No person other than a Councilor or the person having the floor shall engage another Councilor or person in debate or discussion without permission of the presiding officer. The presiding officer may allow 2 Councilors to debate and may limit the time of the debate.
- i. Councilors shall confine their remarks in debate to the pending question.
- j. Any Councilor who knows in advance of a meeting that they wish to obtain certain data or have a question answered, or wishes specific figures or expenditures, or the like, should, insofar as possible, inform the President and Town Manager in writing to facilitate the opportunity to have the answer available at such meeting.
- k. The presiding officer, and Councilors shall address each other by first names.

6.4 Preservation of Order, Right to Speak, and Vote

The President or presiding officer shall preserve decorum and order, may speak to points of order in preference to other Councilors, and decide all questions of order. [Charter Sec. 2.2\(b\).](#)

The President may speak in favor of, or in opposition to, any motion and may participate and vote under the same rules as applied to other Councilors. [Charter Sec. 2.2\(b\).](#)

6.5 Conflict of Interest

All Councilors shall comply with MGL ethics and conflict of interest laws. Councilors shall conduct themselves in the spirit of openness and transparency.

RULE 7. MOTIONS

7.1 Motions

Motions shall comply with the Rules as set forth herein, or if not otherwise provided for, with Rule 1.4.

When a measure (main motion) is under debate, the following motions are permitted:

1. Adjourn
2. Recess
3. Appeal the decision of the presiding officer
4. Point of Order
5. Raise a question of privilege
6. Lay on the table or pause discussion (when intending to pause the discussion in order to discuss a different motion that should not wait)
7. Postpone to a certain time
8. Previous question (requires a two-thirds vote)
9. Refer
10. Amend
11. Postpone indefinitely

These motions shall have precedence in the above order. A motion to adjourn shall be in order at any time except upon immediate repetition. When a motion is pending, the motions above it on this list are in order and shall be acted upon first, and motions below the pending motion are out of order. Motions not listed above may be considered at the discretion of the President.

The following motions are not debatable:

1. Adjourn
2. Recess
3. Raise a question of privilege
4. Lay on the table or pause discussion
5. Previous question (requires a two-thirds vote)

All other motions shall be debatable.

7.2 Importance of Deliberation and Right to Postpone

The Council believes adequate deliberation of measures to be of the utmost importance. The use of the **Right to Postpone** set forth in the [Charter Sec. 2.10\(c\)](#) should, therefore, be considered within normal Council procedures. Councilors requesting more time before a vote should indicate their reason for a request, for example to obtain more information from Town officials, the public, or simply because a Councilor needs more time to consider the matter before voting.

The **Right to Postpone** allows 1 Councilor to require that a vote on a non-emergency measure be postponed until the next scheduled Council meeting (either regular or special). This can only be used the first time the measure is on the agenda as an action item. The next time the postponed measure is on the agenda as an action item, 4 Councilors can require that the vote be postponed for at least 5 more days. Councilors cannot postpone a vote this way more than once. [Charter Sec. 2.10\(c\)](#).

7.3 Recess

At any time, during debate or otherwise, the President may declare a recess of not more than 30 minutes. Such action shall not be debatable or subject to appeal, nor shall any motions apply thereto.

7.4 Points of Order

When a Councilor calls a point of order, all Councilors shall stop debate until the point of order is resolved.

7.5 Motions for Reconsideration

- a. Motions from the prevailing side. Any Councilor voting with the prevailing side of any measure may move for reconsideration. In the case of a measure decided by a tie vote, a Councilor voting in the negative will be considered as voting with the prevailing side. The motion shall be in order at the same or at the next regular meeting following the vote on the measure.
- b. Motions from the non-prevailing side. Any Councilor voting with the non-prevailing side of any measure may move for reconsideration, when such motion is accompanied by the submission of new or additional information. The motion shall be in order at the next regular meeting following the vote on the measure.
- c. Debate and Time. A motion for reconsideration is debatable only as to the reasons for reconsideration and is not amendable. No more than one motion for reconsideration of the vote on a measure shall be entertained.

7.6 Motions to Rescind or Amend Something Previously Adopted

Motions to rescind or to amend something previously adopted can be made by any Councilor. There is no time limit on making either of these motions. To adopt the motion, the required vote in favor shall be the greater of a majority vote of the full Council or the super-majority vote required on the original motion.

RULE 8. LEGISLATIVE PROCESS

8.1 Introduction of Bylaws and Other Measures

a. Non-Emergency Measures:

Proposed bylaws and other measures shall:

1. Be introduced in writing
2. Be limited to one subject, which shall be clearly stated in the title
3. Bear the name of the sponsor
4. Be in the form necessary for final adoption

A proposal to adopt, amend, or repeal a Town bylaw shall set out in full the portion to be so adopted, amended, or repealed, with additions indicated in bold and/or underline and deletions indicated by striking through.

Any Council action that provides for the imposition of a fine or penalty shall be in the form of a proposed bylaw.

Each proposed bylaw shall include a statement of authority for the Council to act with the appropriate section of the Charter or MGL clearly cited.

Proposed resolutions, proclamations, commemorations, or citations shall be introduced either by a Councilor sponsor or by Group Petition or by Initiative as described in [Charter Sec. 8.2\(b\), 8.3, and 8.5](#).

b. Emergency Measures:

An emergency measure shall:

1. Be introduced in accordance with the requirements for non-emergency measures
2. Be plainly designated as an emergency measure
3. Contain a preamble which declares and defines the emergency
4. Contain statements after the enacting clause:
 - Declaring that an emergency exists
 - Describing the scope and nature of the emergency in clear and specific terms

The preamble shall be separately voted and requires the affirmative vote of 7 members of the Council.

An emergency measure is effective upon adoption or at such later time as it may specify.

An emergency measure may be passed, with or without amendment, or rejected at the same meeting at which such measure is introduced. Emergency measures shall stand repealed on the 61st day following their adoption, unless an earlier date is specified in the measure.

8.2 Referral of Measures

- a. The Council may refer any measure to a Council Committees, the Town Manager, or Town multiple-member bodies, which shall constitute a request for a report on such matters. The Council shall specify a time period for a Committee to report back.
- b. A Council Committee shall report back on any measure referred to it under Sections c., d., e., or f. below within 45 days of referral.
- c. **Financial Measures:** All measures authorizing a loan, the levying of a tax, or the expenditure of money (except for budgets submitted under [Charter Sec. 5.5](#)) shall be automatically referred to the Finance Committee when received by the Council. The President shall notify the Council of the referral at the next regular Council meeting.
- d. **Town Manager Appointments:** Appointments made by the Town Manager under [Charter Sec. 3.3](#) shall be automatically referred to the Town Services and Outreach Committee when filed with the Council and Town Clerk. The President shall notify the Council of the referral at the next regular Council meeting.
- e. **Bylaws:** All measures proposing bylaw changes shall be automatically referred to the Governance, Organization, and Legislation Committee. If a measure proposing a bylaw change is referred to another committee in addition to the Governance, Organization, and Legislation Committee, the time for the Governance, Organization, and Legislation Committee to report back to the Council shall not begin until the other committee has completed its review and made a recommendation on the measure. The President shall notify the Council of the referral at the next regular Council meeting.
- f. **Resolutions, Proclamations, Commemorations, and Citations:** All resolutions, proclamations, commemorations, and citations complying with Rule 8.1.a shall be automatically referred to the Governance, Organization, and Legislation Committee. The President shall notify the Council of the referral at the next regular Council meeting.
- g. The President may refer a measure to the appropriate Council Committee(s) (but not a Town multiple-member body) upon receipt, if that measure is deemed to contain a minor request for action or is time limited.
 1. A minor request for action includes, but is not limited to, revisions that do not change policy.
 2. A time limited measure shall be a measure that requires the Council to act within a period of time, which, if referral waits until the next regular Council meeting, could endanger the appropriate consideration of the measure in committee.
 3. The President shall notify the Council of all referrals at the next regular Council meeting.
- h. A Council Committee may choose to take up a matter brought to the Council's attention and within its jurisdiction without formal referral from the Council if it notifies the Council at the next regular Council meeting after it takes up the matter.

8.3 Public Notice of Bylaw Proposals

- a. All non-emergency measures to adopt, amend, or repeal a bylaw shall be:
 1. Published on the Town's bulletin board for at least 14 days prior to the vote. [Charter Sec. 2.10\(a\)](#).
 2. Read at 2 separate Council meetings prior to the vote. [Charter Sec. 2.10\(a\)](#). The vote on the proposed measure may occur at the meeting where it is read for the second time.
- b. In addition, non-emergency measures to adopt, amend, or repeal a zoning bylaw shall be:
 1. Published once in each of 2 successive weeks, the first publication to be not less than 14 days before the day of the hearing required by [MGL Ch. 40A, Sec. 5](#).
 2. Posted, with the notice, on the Town bulletin board for a period of not less than 14 days before the day of the hearing.
- c. In order to expedite the Council's deliberations when considering a lengthy proposed bylaw, the President may waive the reading of the proposed bylaw, provided that a brief summary of the substance of the proposed bylaw shall be provided and read by the Town Manager, a Councilor, or the bylaw's sponsor.

8.4 Discussion of Measures

Except for resolutions, proclamations, commemorations, citations, appointments, referrals, and emergency measures, the Council shall discuss measures at a regular Council meeting prior to the meeting on which the measure will be voted. The discussion need not include the specific language of the measure to be voted on but shall include the substance of the measure.

A Councilor's Right to Postpone applies to all non-emergency measures considered by the Council. [Charter Sec. 2.10\(c\)](#) and Rule 7.2.

8.5 Absence of a Councilor Sponsor of a Measure

If the Councilor who is the sponsor of a measure is not present when the measure comes before the Council, the President shall postpone consideration of the measure to the next regular Council meeting, unless the sponsor has designated another Councilor to speak on the measure by providing the President written notice 24 hours in advance of the meeting.

8.6 Consideration of Non-Emergency Measures Prior to Vote

The following requirements apply for non-emergency measures. Two-thirds of the full Council may vote to waive the following requirements for a specific measure, appointment, or bylaw at a regular Council meeting.

Financial Measures: The Council shall not vote on any measure authorizing a loan, the levying of a tax, or the expenditure of money until it has been considered by the Finance Committee.

Appointments: The Council shall not vote to confirm any appointment made by the Town Manager until it has been considered by the Town Services and Outreach Committee.

Bylaws: The Council shall not vote on any proposed bylaw until it has been considered by the Governance, Organization, and Legislation Committee.

To the extent feasible and when necessary, proposed bylaws shall be reviewed by the Town Attorney prior to a final vote by the Council.

Resolutions, Proclamations, Commemorations, and Citations: The Council shall not vote on any proposed resolution, proclamation, commemoration, or citation until it has been considered by the Governance, Organization, and Legislation Committee.

8.7 Resubmission

A zoning bylaw which is finally rejected may not be reconsidered within 2 years unless the Planning Board makes a recommendation to do so. [MGL Ch. 40A, Sec. 5.](#)

When any measure has been finally rejected by the Council, no measure embodying substantially the same subject shall be submitted to the Council within 6 months of its final rejection, unless a majority of the full Council votes in favor of a motion to resubmit the measure or the resubmission otherwise complies with the Charter or these Rules.

8.8 Withdrawal of Measures

At the written request of any sponsor(s) of a measure, a measure shall be withdrawn from consideration in the Council and in all Council Committees to which the matter has been referred, provided the withdrawal is on the agenda of a Council meeting. No vote shall be required. However, if at that meeting sponsors of a measure do not unanimously agree to withdraw a matter, the matter shall not be withdrawn. At that time, upon request, any Councilor shall have their individual sponsorship removed.

8.9 Carryover of Measures to New Legislative Sessions

Measures that have not passed the required number of votes by the end of a legislative session shall automatically carry over to the next session of the Council and shall remain in the Council and in all committees and Town multiple-members bodies to which they have been referred.

Automatic carryover shall not apply if any one of the following conditions is met:

- a. A matter has received a negative recommendation from the Governance, Organization, and Legislation Committee.
- b. None of the sponsors of the measure will be serving in the next session of the Council.
- c. A majority of the full Council votes to prevent automatic carryover of a matter to the next session. For this purpose, at the request of any Councilor, the President shall place any such pending matter on the agenda at the final meeting of the session.

RULE 9. VOTING REQUIREMENTS

9.1 Quorum

Quorum is 7 Councilors. [Charter Sec. 2.6\(b\)](#).

9.2 Meeting and Posting Requirements

The Council must read a proposed amendment to the Rules of Procedure at 2 separate meetings for it to be enacted. Rule 1.6.

The Council must read a proposed non-emergency bylaw change at 2 separate meetings before voting on it. [Charter Sec. 2.10\(a\)](#). Readings may be waived under certain conditions. See Rule 8.3.c.

A bylaw change must be posted at least 14 days before the voting on it. [Charter Sec. 2.10\(a\)](#).

9.3 Method and Timing of Voting

The text of the motion and the number of votes required for passage shall be stated by the President prior to a vote.

The President may order a vote on any measure pending before the Council if failure to act would terminate the Council's power to act because of the expiration of a federal or state mandated time limit or similar circumstance.

9.4 Roll Call Votes

Items requiring a roll call vote:

- Budget. [Charter Sec. 5.5\(c\)](#).
- To consider and act on a portion of the budget at a different time. [Charter Sec. 5.5\(c\)](#).
- To fill a Councilor vacancy. [Charter Sec. 2.12](#).
- All votes taken during any meeting in which a member participates remotely. [940 CMR 29.10\(7\)\(c\)](#).
- All votes to enter into or exit from Executive Session. [MGL Ch. 30A Sec. 22](#)
- All votes to release Executive Session minutes. [MGL Ch. 30A Sec. 22](#)

9.5 Number of Votes Required

Items requiring at least 10 votes in favor for passage:

- A properly protested zoning bylaw change. [Charter Sec. 2.10\(a\)](#) and [MGL Ch. 40A Sec. 5](#).
- Appointing a former Councilor to a paid Town position within 1 year of serving on the Council. [Charter Sec. 2.3\(a\)](#).

Items requiring at least 9 votes in favor for passage:

- A zoning bylaw change. [Charter Sec. 2.10\(a\)](#) and [MGL Ch. 40A Sec. 5](#).
- Votes on unpaid bills from a previous fiscal year. [MGL Ch. 44 Sec. 64](#).
- Borrowing authorizations. [MGL Ch. 44](#) (multiple sections).

Items requiring at least 7 votes in favor for passage:

- A non-zoning bylaw change. [Charter Sec. 2.10\(a\)](#).
- Designating a measure an “emergency measure”. [Charter Sec. 2.10\(b\)](#).
- Confirming an appointment made by the Town Manager. [Charter Sec. 2.11\(a\) and \(b\)](#).
- Appointing the Town Manager. [Charter Sec. 3.1](#).
- Allowing the Town Manager to engage in other business. [Charter Sec. 3.1](#).
- All votes relating to the removal or suspension of the Town Manager. [Charter Sec. 3.8](#).
- Amending Council Rules of Procedures. Rule 1.6.

Items requiring at least 2/3 of Councilors present and voting to vote in favor for passage (Abstentions don’t count):

- Spending money from the Stabilization Fund. [MGL Ch. 40 Sec. 5b](#).
- Any other Council actions that, by statute, require at least a 2/3 affirmative vote of Councilors present and voting.

Items requiring at least a majority of Councilors present (whether or not voting) to vote in favor for passage (Abstentions count as “no” votes):

- Votes on non-bylaw measures (orders, resolutions, proclamations, appointments, or other adopted proceedings). [Charter Sec. 2.6\(c\)](#).

Items requiring at least a majority of Councilors present and voting to vote in favor for passage (Abstentions don’t count):

- Votes on non-measures.
- Filling a Councilor vacancy.

RULE 10. COUNCIL COMMITTEES AND COMMITTEES OF THE TOWN

10.1 Council Committees

Council Committees shall meet regularly to review matters referred to them by the Councilor to take up other matters within their domains. Matters of policy shall be referred to the appropriate committee(s), so that careful study and consideration can be given to the subject matter. Where appropriate, Committees shall work with other Council Committees to assure the coordination of related aspects within the purview of those committees.

Council Committees shall take no action that would bind the Council.

10.2 Process to establish Council Committees

- a. In addition to the Finance Committee established by the Charter, the Council may establish its own Standing and Ad-Hoc Committees by majority vote. [Charter Sec. 2.6\(e\)](#).
- b. The President appoints members of all Council Committees. [Charter Sec. 2.2\(b\)](#).
 1. The President shall ask Councilors for their committee preferences prior to making appointments. Councilors shall receive notification of their appointment from the President prior to the public announcement.
 2. Councilors, including the President, not appointed as a member of a specific Council Committee are entitled to participate in the same manner as members of the public.
- c. Appointments or reappointments to Standing Committees shall be made by the 2nd meeting in January. Appointments following creation of a new Council Committee shall be made no later than the next regular meeting following its creation.
- d. The Council shall review its Committee organization each year.

10.3 Standing Council Committees

The Council has established the following 4 Council Committees.

- [Finance](#): 5 Councilors; 3 Non-Voting Resident members. Rule 10.9.
- [Governance, Organization, and Legislation](#) (GOL): 5 Councilors.
- [Town Services and Outreach](#) (TSO): 5 Councilors.
- [Community Resources](#) (CRC): 5 Councilors.

10.4 Ad Hoc Council Committees

The Council, by majority vote, may establish Ad Hoc Committees for the purpose of considering a policy or issue or for other purposes. Ad Hoc Committees may make recommendations and sponsor bylaws, resolutions, or other measures.

- a. Ad Hoc Committees are created by the Council to serve the Council and not subject to Charter provisions governing multiple-member bodies.
- b. Standing Council Committees may recommend to the Council the creation of an Ad Hoc Committee to consider an issue or measure if they determine that it is sufficiently complex to warrant in-depth research beyond the capabilities of the Standing Council Committee.

- c. Ad Hoc Committees may include non-Councilors as members.
- d. The Council may create an Ad Hoc Committee by motion. The motion to create an Ad Hoc Committee shall include, at minimum:
 - 1. The composition of the committee.
 - 2. The measure or issue that shall be the committee's focus.
 - 3. The specific task to which the committee is assigned.
 - 4. The deliverables the Council expects from the committee.
 - 5. A date by which the committee shall produce its deliverables.
- e. Ad Hoc Committees do not require a committee charge, although the Council may choose to adopt one.
- f. The President shall appoint all Ad Hoc Committee members.
- g. The President or designee shall preside over the Ad Hoc Committee until a chair is elected.
- h. An Ad Hoc Committee is dissolved by majority vote of the Council unless the motion to create includes a date or other provision regarding its dissolution.
- i. Ad Hoc Committees shall not exist beyond the current term of the Council.

10.5 Powers and Duties of Standing and Ad Hoc Council Committees

- a. At the first meeting after appointments are made, Committees shall elect a Chair who will be the committee spokesperson in matters with the Council. The President or Vice President shall preside until the Chair is elected. Committees shall also elect a Vice Chair.
- b. The President may not chair a Standing Council Committee and no Councilor may chair more than one Standing Council Committee.
- c. Committees shall meet regularly at such times and places as they may proscribe.
- d. Special meetings of a Committee may be held if called by the Committee's Chair or at the request of one-third of the Committee members but not fewer than 2 members.
- e. Committees shall hold an initial meeting no later than 60 days after the appointment of their members.
- f. A majority of voting members of a Committee shall constitute a quorum.
- g. Committees shall have the same power as the Council regarding investigation and access to information within the Committee's jurisdiction.
- h. Regular committee meetings shall provide for a period of public comment.
- i. Minutes shall comply with Rule 3.5.a.
- j. Committees shall report to the Council as needed. Any recommendation for action must be submitted in writing for inclusion in the Council Packet.
 - 1. Reports shall include the date of the report, list of Committee members, a summary of the discussion, including pros and cons relating to any proposed action, minority views, a record of any votes taken regarding the proposed action, and dates of meetings held.
 - 2. Committees shall adopt a practice for Committee review and comment on written reports before submission to the Council.

3. Written reports shall be provided to the President and Clerk of the Council at least 3 days in advance of the Council Meeting.

10.6 Councilors Appointed to Committees Named in the Charter

a. In addition to Council Committees, the Charter establishes 2 Town Committees that include Councilors. Annually, the Council shall vote to appoint Councilors to the following committees based on interest after an initial poll to ascertain preferences.

- Joint Capital Planning Committee. [Charter Sec. 5.7\(b\)](#).
- Budget Coordinating Group. [Charter Sec. 5.2](#).

b. The President shall appoint 1 Councilor to serve on the Participatory Budgeting Commission. [Charter Sec. 10.11](#).

10.7 Creation of Town Committees

The Council may establish multiple-member bodies that include both Councilors and residents as members. The Council shall vote at a meeting on Councilors to serve on the multiple-member body. The President shall then forward the Council decision to the Town Manager.

10.8 Councilors as Non-voting Liaisons

The Council may designate Councilors as non-voting liaisons to multiple-member bodies, the School Committee, and Library Trustees. [Charter Sec. 2.9\(d\)](#). The function of a liaison is to serve as a link between the Council and the multiple-member body to which they are assigned. They are there to observe, share information, answer questions to the degree that they can, and make sure that the Council is kept apprised of the work of the body to which they are a liaison. They are not there to advocate or promote a particular policy or course of action.

- a. Liaisons are not voting members of the body.
- b. Liaisons shall identify themselves as liaisons prior to the first instance of speaking at each meeting. When recognized by the Chair, liaisons may ask questions and make comments during discussion.
- c. Liaisons shall not participate remotely.
- d. Liaisons shall not comment during Public Comment.
- e. Liaisons shall not express personal opinions when recognized by the Chair to speak.
- f. Liaisons shall not commit the Council to a course of action and are not to speak on behalf of the Council.
- g. Liaisons shall sit where the public are seated.
- h. Liaisons shall receive meeting postings, agendas, reports, and minutes from the other body.
- i. Liaisons are not required to attend all meetings of the other body but should be familiar with the materials provided as above and maintain contact with the other body's Chair.
- j. Liaisons shall report any of the other body's pending policy or budget recommendations to the full Council in a timely manner.

- k. Not all Town multiple-member bodies will have liaisons. The Council shall produce a priority list of bodies to be assigned Council liaisons which list shall be reviewed annually by GOL. The President shall send a list of all liaisons, together with a copy of this Rule, to all Town multiple-member bodies, the School Committee, and Library Trustees after each annual reorganization. Bodies without a current liaison may ask the Council to assign one, subject to availability.
- l. Councilors shall indicate their liaison preferences annually.

10.9 Appointment of Non-Voting Members of Finance Committee

The Finance Committee may include members of the public, who shall have a voice but no vote in the Finance Committee's deliberations. Per [Charter Sec. 5.5](#), the Council (not the President) is the appointing authority.

Appendix A: Town Council Statement of Values

The Town Council adopts the following values to guide it.

- **Community Participation:** We value a people-friendly approach to governing, including robust public participation in developing solutions to current and future challenges.
- **Creativity and Innovation:** We value new ideas and approaches to governing while honoring what has been done in the past.
- **Culture:** We value Amherst as a center for the arts, history, and education and strive to learn from, preserve and celebrate those gifts.
- **Diversity, Inclusion, and Equity:** We value the diversity of our residents, the inclusion of voices, ideas and cultures that reflect Amherst's rich personality, and the creation of safe spaces and equal opportunities for participation.
- **Environmental Sustainability:** We value an ethic of sustainable environmental and energy practices in all Town activities.
- **Fiscal Responsibility:** We value sustainable budgets that aim to provide sound, reasonable, and prudent resource management.
- **Healthy Balance:** We value creating a culture that promotes healthy lifestyles and celebrates our achievements.
- **Respect:** We value a culture of compassion and respect for different points of view, experience, and knowledge.
- **Teamwork:** We value our colleagues, working in collaboration, and taking pride in our collective work.
- **Transparency:** We value the trust people have placed in us and transparency in everything we do including our intentions, processes, and decisions.